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Good advice about CIA

The case for presidential, congressional and public controls over the U.S. intelligence community has rarely been made more authoritatively than by Stansfield Turner, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and George Thibault, Turner's special assistant in the Carter administration.

Their remarks are not only authoritative, but timely and relevant, given the Reagan administration's attempts to loosen the controls that were tightened by Presidents Ford and Carter as a result of the many intelligence abuses uncovered by the Rockefeller Commission, the Church Committee and other investigators during the Watergate era.

The Reagan administration has recently given two examples of its intentions to give the CIA greater authority, independence and secrecy. It successfully argued in court that the CIA should be allowed to conceal its relationships with American colleges and universities, and CIA Director William Casey argued in a speech to the American Legion that the country must "get rid of the Freedom of Information Act" in its present form.

Turner and Thibault maintain that, in spite of the danger of information leaks and other problems, "congressional oversight strengthens intelligence capabilities."

Recent attempts to hide intelli-

gence information or activities from the public "deprive Americans of a valuable source of information on national issues without good reason and deprive the intelligence community of a valuable source of outside stimulus and dialogue," they believe.

They claim that, in the immediate post-Watergate period, the CIA was excessively restricted, but now the pendulum is swinging in the other direction.

In legislative terms, Turner and Thibault's most constructive recommendation is for a charter that would spell out the rights and obligations of the intelligence community, so the rules it operates under don't change with each administration.

Such a charter, the two assert, is needed "for the sake of professionals who have been trying to do their jobs while never knowing exactly what they were authorized to do, and for the sake of the American people who discovered a few years ago that their blind trust in the intelligence community has been unwise."

The Carter administration and the Senate Intelligence Committee nearly agreed on a charter in 1979 and 1980. Such agreement should be sought and achieved by the Congress and the Reagan administration. The views of Turner and Thibault concerning presidential, congressional and public oversight ought to be included.